

AN 10/687,158
Page 6

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-18 were pending in this office action, of which claims 15-18 are withdrawn in compliance with the restriction requirement. Claim 1 has been amended correct a typographical error.

Restriction Requirement

The Office Action stated that all pending claims 1-18 were subject to restriction. In particular, the position was taken that the application includes claims directed to two distinct inventions. Group I, claims 1-14, are drawn to a method of cleaning a contaminated surface, while Group II, claims 15-18, are drawn to a head suspension. The Applicant hereby affirms the withdrawal of claims 15-18 from further consideration in response to the restriction requirement.

35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 6 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner stated that the phrase "generally" in claims 6 and 12 renders the claims indefinite since the resulting claim does not clearly set forth the means and bounds of the patent protection desired. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. It is known in the art that the shape of a beam from any light source, including a laser beam, may slightly alter over distance (for example, as by spreading). Furthermore, after the laser beam 134 is shaped by the mask 136, it is optionally focused and sized by lens 140. While the lens 140 typically does not change the shape of the laser beam 134, the lens 140 may adjust the size of the laser beam (See lines 7-14, page 5). Thus, use of the phrase "generally" merely implies that while the shape of the laser beam, as shaped by the aperture, corresponds to a shape of the contaminated surface, it is not necessarily identical. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

AN 10/687,158
Page 7

35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-4 and 9-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Albrecht et al. Albrecht is directed to a method of smoothing lift tab surfaces by rapidly melting the surface of the lift tab with a pulsed laser beam. Albrecht requires that the laser beam be capable of producing a per-pulse energy sufficient to melt the material of the lift tab at a depth of at least 0.2 microns and preferably up to 10 microns (See Col. 4, lines 57-61). Thus, while Albrecht notes that it would be preferable to smooth the entire cylindrical portion 24 (of the lift tab) with a single pulse, Albrecht also states such a feat is not practical in a manufacturing setting because (1) a laser or other device capable of smoothing such a large area must produce exceptionally powerful energy pulses, and (2) such a laser would be very large and expensive (See Col 7, lines 35-43). Thus, Albrecht teaches away from attempting to apply a laser beam extending across an entire surface when performing the described smoothing process.

Rather than melting down the surface of the suspension to a minimum depth, the method of claim 1 is directed to laser cleaning a contaminated surface on the suspension, thus avoiding the problems discussed with respect to the Albrecht method. Albrecht neither discloses nor suggests a method of cleaning a contaminated surface on a head suspension, by, in part, patterning a laser beam such that a single pulse extends across the entire contaminated surface and applying one or more pulses of the laser energy sufficient to laser clean the contaminated surface as described in claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested. Claims 2-4 and 9-10 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least that reason.

Claim 11 is directed to a method of cleaning a contaminated surface of a head suspension, by, in part, simultaneously applying laser energy to a region that extends across at least the contaminated surface wherein the entire contaminated surface is cleaned simultaneously. As discussed above, Albrecht neither discloses nor suggests such a feature. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

AN 10/687,158
Page 8

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 5-8 and 12-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Albrecht et al. in view of Hosoya et al. Claims 5-8 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least those reasons described above. Similarly, claims 12-14 depend from claim 11 and are allowable for at least those reasons described above. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

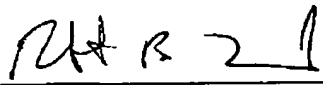
All of the claims remaining in this application should now be seen to be in condition for allowance. The prompt issuance of a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited. If there are any remaining questions, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

No fee is believed to be necessary for entry of this paper. If this should prove incorrect, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the Faegre & Benson Deposit Account No. 06-0029 as necessary, and is requested to notify us of the same.

Respectfully Submitted,

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